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WILD GEESE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ANNIE CRIM LEAVENWORTH

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
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WILD GEESE AND OTHER POEMS

Wild Geese
and Other Poems

By

ANNIE CRIM LEAVENWORTH

NEW YORK
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1921

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To Mary A. Meyer

With love and gratitude

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WILD GEESE

The wild geese flew to the South last night.
I heard their honk as they steered them past,
And my wild heart leaped to their arrow-flight;
But the night was dark, and the geese fly fast.

A bugle note through the windless sky—
More clear, more loud, then more faint, more low.
They left no trace I could follow by,
For there's never a track where the wild geese go.

And I was swept with a quick despair
As fainter echoed their speeding calls,
For their wings were swift on the pathless air,
While my heart's wings beat against four gray walls.

WAYFARER

O, I was born a gypsy
  And was shod in gypsy shoon
When still I was a baby
  Babbling for the moon;
And the wind that rocked my cradle—
  It sang a gypsy tune.

O, the gypsy shoon have borne me
  To many a friendly door
Where loving hearts would hold me
  To share their sheltered store;
But I never could stay for hearing
  The song the night wind bore.

FLAMES

The flames leap up the chimney
  And spurn the stolid logs
They're whipping into ashes
  Between the dumb firedogs—
The red flames, the gold flames,
  They flaunt their ragged togs.

The flames leap up the chimney—
  They're swallowed in the dark.
Its soot-throat gapes to catch them
  And leaves no slightest mark
Of blue flame or red flame
  Or whisking golden spark.

The flames die in the chimney;
  The fire dies in the night;
The embers blink and crumble
  To ashes gray and white
From red flames—poor dead flames—
  And flames of silver light.

MINNOWBROOK

Minnowbrook—I never knew
What a spell a name can brew
Till I heard them tell of you.

I can see the silver gleam
Of your prattling mountain stream
Flashing through my hazy dream.

Minnowbrook—I hear the brawl
Of your tumbling waterfall
Hidden, half, in grasses tall.

Alders bending close about
Quiet pools where—not a doubt—
One *might* catch a speckled trout.

Minnowbrook—high flags that wade
Where your shallows flecked with shade
Harbor minnows unafraid.

Then beneath the wooded hill
Stands a lazy, log-hewn mill
Whose slow wheel your waters fill.

Minnowbrook—and can you know,
As your lakeward way you go,
All the beauties that you show?

Do you know the very thought
Of your crystal course is fraught
With a blessing magic-wrought?

Minnowbrook—I never knew
What a spell a name can brew
Till I heard them tell of you.

SEA GULL

The great gray waves lift mountain-high
  And toss the huge ship on their breast.
The tempest howls a wailing cry
  Above the towering waters' crest.

The mighty vessel shuddering swings
  While wakeful watch the lookouts keep;
But a tiny gray bird folds its wings
  And cradles on the vast gray deep.

THE CHANNEL

They played a giddy, ragtime thing
  In measure with the vessel's beat,
And then a song with luring swing
  To time a Spanish dancer's feet;
While those who heard laughed out to see
  The young folks frolic at its call;
But to the Channel's history,
Its legends and its mystery,
  They gave no thought at all.

'Twas here, his courtiers' boast to shame,
  Canute once bade the waves be still;
'Twas here ambitious Caesar came
  With Roman arms to work his will;
And fathoms, fathoms deep below,
  In graves unnumbered and unwept,
Where they had sunk long years ago
O'erpowered by storm and earthly foe,
  Old Spain's grim galleons slept.

But those aboard, what reckoned they
  Of Rome and Spain and British lore?
They only saw the lighthouse ray
  Flash out protection from the shore;
They only heard the merry band
  Blare music to the dancing waves;
And wheeling gaily hand-in-hand,
With hearts that could not understand,
  They danced o'er nations' graves.

THE VOICE OF THE MOUNTAIN

Oh, dare you face eternal things
  That in my silence grow
And feel my brushing angel-wings,
  You from the world below?

Or can you, gazing down from high
  Upon the pigmy earth,
Bid friends and race and goal goodby
  And die to second birth?

Have you the courage to resign
  Your fiercely guarded store
Of self, and make your spirit mine
  Till you are you no more?

If this you dare, then come to me,
  Frail children of the clods;
And though yourselves can nothing be,
  Myself can make you gods.

SANCTUARY

Sunlight in the valley,
  A haze upon the hills;
The wonderwoven beauty
  My heart with glory fills.

No human tongue has spoken
  To bid my soul rejoice;
Just in the haze, a Presence;
  And in the calm, a Voice.

WIND AND SUN—IN SPRING

High, low—sigh, blow,—
  Hurry from East and West,
Hurry from North and Southland,
  From valley and mountain crest.
Whisper to every flower
  And tell to each folded leaf
That summer is calling—calling,
  And life, at the most, is brief.

Gleam, sun! Beam, sun!
  Smile on the sleeping earth.
Waken its sluggish pulses
  To the joy of a green rebirth.
Warm with your kiss the furrows
  And cheer every bud you meet
With the faith of uncounted ages—
  That life, at its best, is sweet.

THE MOCKING BIRD

The singin'est song that ever I heard
Is sung in the spring by the mocking bird.
He sits on a limb and just for fun
Takes a heap of tunes and pours them into one,
Gurgling them, and crying them, and rippling them, and trilling,——
Bubbling them, and whistling them,—twee, twee, twee!
Seems as if the notes come out so fast they come a-spilling,
Seems as if he's laughing and a-calling this to me,—
"Ha, ha, ha! And a ho, ho, ho!
"I might be a cat and I might be a crow—
"You can't tell the difference, I know.
"Look if you like, but you can't find me
"Hid in this old persimmon tree."

I pull in my mule and I look all around
From the top of the tree to the top of the ground;
Then comes a streak of white and gray
And from 'way off yonder the song drifts back my way,
Gurgling back, and crying back, and rippling back, and trilling,——
Bubbling back, and whistling back,—twee, twee, twee!

Seems as if the notes come out so fast they come a-spilling,
Seems as if he's laughing and a-calling this to me,—
"Ha, ha, ha! And a ho, ho, ho!
"I might have been a cat and I might have been a crow—
"*You* couldn't tell the difference, I know.
"Blind Brother Mortal, *couldn't* you see
"I was sitting in that old persimmon tree?"

DOGWOOD

On still spring nights you can see them
  When there's a phantom breeze
And the moonbeams slip through the shadows
  To join in their revelries—
The little white ghosts of the dogwood
  Dancing among the trees.

Silent the sleeping forest.
  Just from the brook a rare
Murmur of restless dreaming
  As it moves in its bed; and there
The little white ghosts of the dogwood
  Dance in the spring-sweet air.

They thrill to a soundless music
  That trembles in pulsing bars,
And never a note of discord
  Their rhythmical rapture mars,
For the little white ghosts of the dogwood
  Dance to the song of the stars.

FICKLE

You smile from off the eastern hill
A promise you will not fulfill
  Upon your way;
For sudden rains come pouring down
And then you laugh to see us frown,
  O April day!

APRIL ECHOES

April loves and April laughter,
April songs,—and then soon after,
April sorrows, April sighs,
Rainbow gleams in April skies.

Youth a-dream and Youth a-daring,
Youth a-tiptoe to be sharing
Life and happiness together
In the quivering April weather.

Glad the living, glad the going,—
Gladder far the never knowing
Whether joy or bitter sorrow,
Dawns with faraway to-morrow.

Ah, but you whose blood flows fleetest
Cannot know we have the sweetest,
Finest blessing—to remember
Looking back from dim December.

SURSUM CORDA

When April sunshine lingers
  On tender greening hills
And roots reach thirsty fingers
  To April-showered rills,
    The birds that watch the miracle
    Pour forth their praises lyrical
    Like golden sunbeams capturéd
    By tiny throats enrapturéd,
When April sunshine lingers
  On tender greening hills.

When April showers patter
  On sunkissed swelling sod,
No mortal grief can matter—
  Our hearts mount up to God.
    Though winterworn and faltering,
    We feel His love unaltering,
    Renew the pledge of life to us—
    That peace will come through strife to us,
When April showers patter
  On sunkissed swelling sod.

THREE WHO PASSED IN APRIL

Up the street and down the street
  And through the winding ways
Shy Evening crept on tiptoe
  In robe of April haze;
And two there were who walked with her
  Unseen by mortal gaze.

The eyes of one outshone the sun
  As madly he did sing;
And weary folk were heartened,
  For, soft as whispering,
Upon their eyes in sweet surprise
  They felt the breath of Spring.

And all the while, with wistful smile
  Both sad and fair to see,
The other scattered incense
  That drifted far and free,
And passersby, not knowing why,
  Kept tryst with Memory.

SILVERMINE

An Allegheny glade I know
  Called Silvermine.

  A fitful forest path is led
Along a brook's rough-pebbled bed
By hundred mossy streamlets fed
  That drop their pearls like tinkling bells
From rocky-sided, fern-grown dells
Whose chime to rippling music swells—
    Up Silvermine.

  The hoary-headed mountains lean
Their woody sides of shaded green
To shelter close the magic scene,
  Enfolding it with silence rare
That trembles on the pine-sweet air
With echoing bird songs everywhere.

  And there you find among the rest
The cardinal with flaming crest
Has built his leafy hidden nest;
  And you can hear him from a tree
Pour out his heart so merrily
It makes you thrill in sympathy
    Up Silvermine.

There glossy laurels lightly fling
Their loveliness each perfect spring
In pink and white abandoning;
And towering rhododendrons spread
Their rosy foam high overhead
In gleaming greenness garlanded,

While straight-boled, stately tulip trees
And wax magnolias catch the breeze
That hums with eager honey bees,
And blushing redbuds hide their glow
In farflung dogwood's cooling snow.—
A nook in Paradise I know—
'Tis Silvermine.

SPRING AND FALL

When from the hills the laughing rills
  O'er rocky barriers leaping
With joyful shout come rushing out,
  Through quiet valleys sweeping;
When from the earth in radiant birth
  The first brave blossoms springing
Nod dainty heads from leafy beds,
  They set my heart a-singing,—
    Heigh ho for every growing thing!
      Come, welcome, lark and swallow!
    For spring is here to greet the year
      And summer soon will follow.

When from the trees a madcap breeze
  Sets painted leaves a-swirling,
And down the stream with sudden gleam
  Like fairy boats they're whirling;
When o'er the land on every hand
  The purple mists are lying,
And flowers lie dead within each bed.
  Ah, then my heart's a-sighing,—
    Sleep sweetly now, oh living things,
      Fly southward, lark and swallow,
    For fall is here to speed the year
      And winter soon will follow.

HONEYSUCKLE

Welcome to you, rambling, fragrant,
Wilding beauty, wayside vagrant,
Draping emerald robes about you!
Earth were barer far without you!
Folk content with northern clime
Never know you in your prime,—
Never find your waxen riches
Lavish flung o'er banks and ditches,—
Never see the brookside bowers
Hung with gold and ivory flowers
Where your tangled foliage crushes
Dogwood down—deep haunts for thrushes
Nesting safe in dark seclusion
'Neath your rioting profusion,—
Never feel your sweet perfume
Stealing on them in the gloom
Of summer evenings from a thicket
Shrill with cry of frog and cricket.
Here how bounteous you lift
Twin-borne goblets with your gift.
Honeyed nectar offering
Humming birds for banqueting!
How you heap the billowed hedges,
How you weave through marshy sedges
Feathery blanket for a stream
Babbling in a sluggish dream—!

Missionary of the wild
Spreading freshness undefiled
In a friendly ministration
Over blots of desolation—
Where deserted cabins tumble,
Where old forest monarchs crumble,
Soft you spread your living pall
Kindly covering their fall.—
Honeysuckle, just a weed,
Slighted, trampled on, indeed;
Yet your loveliness I'll treasure
With a tender, vivid pleasure;
And as long as I remember
I'll find summer in December
While the honeysuckle twines
'Round my heart its gypsy vines.

LOVE SONG

I strolled beside the brooklet where the ripples sing
And stopped awhile to listen to their whispering;
When, sauntering there, I started up in glad surprise—
'Twas just a bunch of bluets, but I saw your eyes!

I rambled in the meadow where the grasses wave
Their tufted heads in harmony with gesture grave;
And while I loitered, pondering their graceful charms,
A zephyr trembled past me, but I felt your arms!

I wandered in the forest when the sun was low
And daylight lingered, fondly seeming loath to go.
I heard a wondrous lovesong made my heart rejoice,—
I knew a woodthrush sang it, but I heard your voice!

And everywhere I went I found my fate the same,
The very leaves in rustling seemed to breathe your name.
The reason for the fancy must, I know, be clear,—
The miles are long between us; and I love you, Dear!

ECHO

The echo of a love song drifting in the air
Passed a wayside briar. A snowy bloom was there
Opening to the sunlight, frail and faintly fair.

The echo brushed its petals, and the blossom
swelled with pride
As quivering words of passion the tender music
sighed;
And the rosebud flushed to hear them, but the echo
—echo—died.

BITTERSWEET

Candle light and tea time
  And red coals glowing,
And through the boughs of leafless trees
  A gusty wind blowing.

Tea time and firelight
  Where dream and shadow meet,
And on the high white mantel
  A twist of bittersweet.

Firelight and bittersweet
  And candles glowing;
And through the stillness of my heart
  A gust of memory blowing.

PINES

I have said goodnight to my pine trees
With the moon between their boughs
Where high on their nests and dreaming
The gray-winged wood doves drowse.

I have climbed to my bedroom window
And leaned once more to hear
The rustle of shifting needles
That the darkness brings more near.

For the pine trees' whispered music
Is more than the songs of men
To quiet my troubled spirit
And cleanse my soul again.

CAT-TAILS

A sunny, windswept hill, that cool
  Swift shadows touch and leave;
And on its top a little pool
  Where braiding cat-tails weave.

They weave a shifting web of dream
  For me who watch beside—
All silver with the softened gleam
  Of glories that have died.

And I remember, with a sigh
  As soft as summer weather,
How while we watched them, you and I,
  They wove our hearts together.

VACATION'S END

And so it's ended. Shall we stoop to say
Goodby in poor convention's threadbare way
Of taking leave? Ah, no; but clasp my hand
And smile your parting, for I understand;
And eyes express what words can never reach.
Why mar the moment with a waste of speech?

We've walked together, laughed together—well,
Perhaps we've loved a little. Who can tell?
I know my heart beats sadder now to go
Because of you, and I am glad 'tis so;
But neither would we linger, although true
Within your gaze I read a sorrow, too.

It's over; and we leave among the flowers
Our friendship woven out of sunny hours—
A tribute to the summer; then once more
We take the separate paths we trod before
Until your face, blurred by each lengthening mile
Grows to be just the memory of a smile.

FAINTHEART

You do not guess my tenderness,
  And I'll not tell. Oh, no!
It's very queer to me, my dear,
  The way such matters go.

If you would dare and not despair,
  Whene'er you look my way
You must surmise, for with my eyes
  I tell you every day.

But man must sue and boldly woo
  To win a maiden, so
My heart I'll hide while you decide,
  But—why are men so slow?

YOUNG LOVE

Our talk flies 'round the truth of it
  Like moths about a flame.
We glory in the youth of it
  But never give it name
Lest we should dim the gleam of it,
  For, like a frightened bird,
The magic and the dream of it
  May vanish at a word.

WELCOME

The dewy, blue-eyed violets,
  They smiled at me to-day.
They've not been here the whole long year
  That you have been away.

But now that you are coming home,
  Their fairy faces glow!
The dewy-eyed blue violets—
  I wonder if they know!

IF LOVE WERE ALWAYS LAUGHTER

If love were always laughter
  And grief were always tears,
With nothing to come after
  To mark the waiting years,
I'd pray a life of love for you
Sent down from heaven above for you,
And never grief come near to you
To spread its shadow, Dear, to you,—
  If love were always laughter
    And grief were always tears.

But grief brings often laughter,
  And love,—ah, love brings tears;
And both leave ever after
  Their blessings on the years;
So, I, Dearheart, would sue for you
A mingling of the two for you,
That grief may lend its calm to you
And love may send its balm to you,
  Since grief brings often laughter
    And love brings often tears.

THE CHALLENGE

Because your smile is shining
  Across the glooms of grief,
I can be brave, divining
  Your will to bring relief.

For like a lark, dawn-greeting,
  That soars in song the while,
So leaps my courage, meeting
  The challenge of your smile.

GOODBY

Do not say that when I go,
Bitterly your tears will flow.
Do not moan that you will be
Desolate for loss of me,
For my spirit could not sleep
Knowing you remain to weep.
Rather promise that in spring
You will walk unsorrowing
Through the paths our lovetime knew
While I yet remained with you;
And that you will gladly say,
"Here we strolled on such a day
"When she let me touch her hair,
"Brush it with my lips,—and there
"Sat we such an afternoon
"Listening to woodbird's tune."
Then where valley lilies bloom,
Close your eyes. Their dear perfume
Freighted with my love, will bring
Me to you, remembering.

THE HEART OF SONG

The hunters sing on the mountain,
The reapers sing in the valley,
The old men doze by the hearth fire;
  But oh, the weary day!

Of love they sing on the mountain,
Of love they sing in the valley,
Of love they dream by the hearth fire;
  But oh, my love's away.

SHADOWS

I never learned until you taught me, Dear,
To find the subtler beauties of the year.
I never dreamed until you told me so
That there are shadows even on the snow.

The sunrise filled my heart with ecstasy,
The glory of the sunset blinded me;
Till, dazzled by the glitter and the glow,
I could not see the shadows on the snow.

I did not guess upon that rapturous day
That there could come a parting to our way;
But when at eventide you turned to go,
Ah, then I saw the shadows on the snow!

Since then I've learned to love them more and more,
The sunrise and the sunset; but before
Them all, the dearest treasure that I know,
Most precious, are the shadows on the snow.

TO MY LOVE

I do not know why the world moves slowly
When you are not here.
I only know that my life lies wholly
In your presence, Dear.

I do not know why your voice is sweeter
Than the breath of Spring.
I only know that my heart leaps fleeter
To its answering.

I do not know, for I cannot measure
What you bring to me.
I only know it's a priceless treasure
For eternity.

SYMPATHY

Peachblow time! And I would stay
To help the world make holiday;
But in my heart it is not spring
Because I find you sorrowing.

Dear, I would mourn the springtime through
If only I could comfort you;
And I would barter all of May
If I could only make you gay.

KEEP ME FOR COMFORT

Keep me for comfort
  When the world's gray,
When the young sunlight
  Filters away.

When the night darkens,
  Threatening harms,
I shall be watching
  With open arms.

Come when you need me,
  Early or late,
Keep me for comfort,—
  Meanwhile I wait.

THE BRIDE

With eager hands I bring them—
  My crystal girlhood dreams;
Like April rain I fling them
  Before your love's bright beams.

Oh, have you power to kindle
  Their hidden rainbow fire:
Or must I watch them dwindle
  In the flame of your desire?

ENCORE

If I should die before the morn,
Let not love's rose my bier adorn;
  For how could I at rest e'er be,
  Remembering, Dear, my loss of thee?

But drowsy poppies lay thereon—
Sweet symbols of oblivion—
  That all my raptures dead and past
  I may forget and sleep at last.

WEARY

I am so tired, God! A little space
  To rest from loving or I perish! See—
There burns no mark of anguish on my face,
  But all my soul is torn with agony!

I still could soothe me were it not for this—
  That one who walks beside me must not know
Or fail to find within my daily kiss
  The joy a loyal heart still strives to show.

I am so tired! All the songs of spring
  Beat down like brazen hammers on my brain;
Yet for his sake I force my lips to sing
  Lest they should cry my love-begotten pain.

But wood doves calling from a budded tree
Bring all the woes of all the world to me.

AFTER

The garlands I wove you, Love, to wear,
  Are turned to chains to bind me.
Your face that dazzled because so fair
  Is blurred by the tears that blind me.

My heart beat warm all the throbbing night,
  Secure in your love's enfolding;
But when I woke in the dawn's dim light
  'Twas only a dream I was holding.

I dreamed, "Love brings me a crown, I know,
  "Of joy for my heart's adorning."
'Twas a crown indeed, but a crown of woe
  I wore in the gray of morning.

THE CROWNING GIFT

He asked of me, his promised wife,
"What is the crowning gift of life?"
And I, rejoicing that I knew,
Exulted, "You!"

We learn so much as years unfold!
My soul now asks that question old
And I reply with eyes grown dim,
"My love of him, my love of him!"

FAREWELL

My arms would close enfold you
  If I could bind you so;
But if I wished to hold you,
  I had to let you go.

The bird with fettered pinion
  Will pine within the nest;
And so in love's dominion—
  But—birds come home to rest.

FIRE FANCY

Goodnight, Dearheart.—The fire dies down
In dwindling heaps of gold and brown
And gray—so still, I scarcely hear
The crackling sparks as I bend near.

Out through the night a spark of thought
And love for you flies, warmly fraught
With tenderness.—Say, feel you aught?

Or can it be no sign appears
To signal you my joys or tears?
Have we lost touch across the years?

FOREVER

One boon I prayed Thee, Lord, to give—
One little boon—that Love might live.

Hear now, O Lord, my sadder cry
And pity me.—Love cannot die!

OCTOBER

Once when the maples had lit crimson fires,
  Once when the oaks spread the altar with gold,
And the temple of Autumn with evergreen spires
  Was reared on the hills and the plains as of old,

Worshipping, childlike, great Nature, the mother,
  Letting our hearts teach our spirits the way,
Lightly we lingered there, I and one other,
  Draining the wonder-wine out of the day.

Roaming just now in a useless endeavor
  Only to dream he was there by my side,
Met me a maid singing, "Love lives forever."—
  Heart o' me, heart o 'me! What was it died?

THANKSGIVING

I cannot thank Thee for the grief
That bowed my breaking heart,
I cannot praise Thee for the curse
That made me one apart.

My spirit shudders still to feel
The burden that it bears;
And sad my soul walks, sorrowing
Beneath the pall it wears.

But yet I worship at Thy feet,
I bless Thee and adore;
For Thou hast left the memory
Of all that went before.

REMEMBERING

I would still remember
  All the ways we went
Through that glad September
  When our souls were blent.

I would always treasure
  Words you used to say—
Little words whose measure
  In their music lay.

Once again in dreaming
  I would see your eyes,
Tenderness outstreaming
  Over all disguise.

Dearest dear, your leaving
  Broke my heart; and yet
Even this, my grieving,
  I would not forget.

I'VE WOVEN ME NEW LOVES

I've woven me new loves
  To warm my heart awhile.

  The old love flashed like shining Truth
Flame-fashioned from the web of Youth;
And when its glow enfolded me,
My spirit danced for very glee.
But I awoke one wintry morn
To find the golden garment torn;
And now, alas, forevermore
I go more softly than before.

My golden gown is gray,
  But I have learned to smile,
For I've woven me new loves
  To warm my heart awhile.

METAMORPHOSIS

Love whispered, "I will be your guide
"And friend through life, whate'er betide."
I, childlike, turned this love to see,
And lo, my mother spoke to me!

I walked through spring-green fields and heard
The mating song of many a bird.
Love called to me. In glad surprise
I saw a youth with burning eyes.

Years passed. I went a woman's way,
And sorrows came as sorrows may.
Then love looked up once more and smiled:
It was a child—a little child!

LULLABY

The twilight is filled with the flutter of wings
  Of birds flying homeward on high—
The robin on yon elm bough twitters and sings,
  "Oh, lullaby, Baby, oh, by!"

The locust comes out and the katydid sings,
  "Goodby, sunny daylight, goodby."
A moth flutters past, and the message he brings
  Is, "Lullaby, Baby, oh by!"

The sunset glow fades and the daytime is done;
  And the stars from their home in the sky
Twinkle down the same message to my little one,
  "Oh, lullaby, Baby, oh by!"

The child on my bosom is quiet at last,
  The soft eyelids curtain each eye,
And all now is still, for the sandman has passed
  Saying, "Lullaby, Baby, oh by!"

THE LESSON

My mother taught me all her lore—
  And she was very wise;
I cherished what she said, and more
  I fathomed in her eyes—
Of patience and of love a store,
  And brave self-sacrifice.

I cherished what she said, and tried
  To follow carefully
Because I hoped with humble pride
  To be as good as she—
As tender and as glorified
  By strong simplicity.

  I thought the lesson I'd divined,
But very strange it was to find
How small a part I'd understood
Until I, too, reached motherhood.

TO MY DAUGHTER

My mother and I dreamed different dreams.
  Oh, well I know that it was so.—
She used to grieve to have me leave
  The prize she'd toiled for long ago,—
The woman she had failed to be
But looked to find fulfilled in me.

Now you and I dream different dreams!
  It's hard to see how it can be;
For Life gives you, if you but knew,
  What seems the highest boon to me;
And yet you dare so lightly wear
The crown I find so dazzling fair!

Mother and child! How strange it seems—
One very flesh with alien dreams!

MUSIC

I made me a song of the joy of my youth,
  A song brimming over with laughter;
And proudly I sang it, and gaily, forsooth,
  And waited for praise to come after.
    My mother but said when the singing was done,
    "Not the smallest brown bird but can sing in the
      sun."

I made me a song of the strength of my years.
  All hushed was the sound of my singing,
For softly I crooned to the tune of the tears
  That Grief from my heartstrings was wringing.
    My mother heard proudly the wistful refrain—
    "'Tis only brave women press music from pain."

THE EXILE

I followed where he led me,
I followed down the valley
Past dogwood all a-blossom
  And buzzing wild with bees.
    My lover said, "Down yonder—"
    As sweet his tone grew, fonder—
    "Our lowland home lies yonder
  "In richer scenes than these."

    But oh, my mountains,
    My gray Great Smoky Mountains,
    My sleepy southern mountains
  Held golden memories!

He brought me to a mansion
Set deep in blooming orchards
With gleaming fertile grain fields
  For many a level mile.
    The door is wreathed with roses,
    A garden wall encloses
    Fair flowers, but its posies
  Scarce win a single smile,—

    For oh, my mountains,
    My purple-pansied mountains,
    My laurel-laden mountains
  I'm wanting all the while!

And now I have my baby.
I bore him in the valley
And cushioned him a cradle
  Where apple blossoms blow.
    And while I sit here sewing
    Beneath the petals' snowing,
    I watch the wee life growing
  And hot my tears will flow.

    For oh, my mountains,
    My cloudy-crested mountains,
    My soaring, sunswept mountains
  My child can never know!

WORKADAY

The little threads of Workaday
  Have woven me a veil,
Until my glowing love of you
  Looks strangely gray and pale.

The clinging threads of Workaday
  Have fashioned me a gown
That presses on my throbbing heart
  And slows its beating down.

The endless threads of Workaday
  Spin sandals for my feet,
To hold them back from seeking you,
  That once were sure and fleet.

Oh, what swift shears of Circumstance
  Can cut my spirit free
Before the threads of Workaday
  Have hidden you from me?

THE TASKS

I used to run with the red-gold sun
  And sing with the silver stars;
My little gray tasks they hushed my song
  And fastened my door with bars.

In crimson clad I danced as mad
  As a leaf when the fields are brown;
My little gray tasks they stilled my feet
  And riddled my crimson gown.

But when hope failed and my spirit quailed
  At the desolate days in view,
'Twas the little gray tasks that took my hands
  And guided me safely through.

THE CAGE

I never loved it all the years
  I had to stay,
And often longed with bitter tears
  To get away.

But now that I am free to go,
  It's very queer—
The place that I have hated so
  Is almost dear.

CARNIVAL AND OTHER POEMS

CARNIVAL

"Carnival, carnival, carnival!"
Lo, how the spell ensnares us all,—
Hark to the luring, laughing call!
Carnival time when the world goes mad,
Mad with a joyance wildly glad,
Mad with the springtime, dancing mad.
Old King Carnival reigns once more,
Reigns as he always has before
With riot and laughter and fun galore;
And crowding the streets, the people all
Homage pay to King Carnival.

There what marvelous sights you see—
Little red devils in prancing glee
Flirting with Sisters of Charity.
Where else, now, could such scandal be?
Pig-tailed Chinamen treading the lanes
With cowboys fresh from the western plains,
Who hold in check with careless reins
Lean ponies with straw in their twisted manes;
While courtly ladies in velvet dressed
Throw kisses alike to the East and West
As if uncertain which pleases best.
Then a jingling fool and a poet or two
Go waltzing together the long street through.
A combination you don't find new?
Well, it's all, you know, in the point of view.

The wine in the air makes our pulses haste;
And there's other wine that won't go to waste,
For we drink both kinds with impartial taste.
Wine, did I say? The thought's not bad!
I know where there's plenty and good to be had.
There's a warm, bright room where the tables stand,
And the glasses clink, and a misty band
Blares smoky ragtime across the blur
Of the bustle and laughter and restless stir.
This is the way.—Come, don't demur.

Look out! There's paper all over the floor;
It tangled my feet as I passed the door;
And confetti and bright-hued cotton balls
Fly thick through the smoke-hung, man-crammed halls
In answer to challenging, jesting calls.

That woman we passed in the street outside,
With the faded face and the eyes that have died,—
Did she ever drift with the festive tide
And flaunt her youth in her wealth of pride?
Away with the hag! What place has she
In the fun-flushed ranks of our revelry?
Oh, why did we turn aside to see
Her haunting face with its poverty?
Come, drown the sight in a glass with me!

Yes, steal a kiss of the waitress there,
With the dancing eyes and the tousled hair, —

It's a hundred to one that she'll not care,—
They're doing it 'round you everywhere,
For in love and—carnival—all is fair.
  Who was it wrote with an instinct wise
Of a "barmaid's pink ribbon Paradise"?
This poor little waif with the questing eyes
Is finding it now, I half surmise;
And you are the angel, in slight disguise,
Who lifts her up to her tinsel skies.
And after?
    It's only in fun, you say?
She's a fool if she takes it another way,
For carnival courtships never stay?
Ah, well; but there's always the price to pay.

  But hark! That shuddering sound of gloom
That comes like a voice from the open tomb
And wails its way through the swarming room!
The laughter sinks in a gasping breath
As if it were suddenly faced by death!

  Of course! I'm an ass to feel a shock!
King Carnival's dead—it's twelve o'clock
And they're bringing his body through the hall
To hold the funeral before us all.
They'll preach a sermon above him here,
Then lay him to rest for another year;
And the wails are mocks as if to mourn

As along through our midst the "corpse" is borne.
It's only a joke,—why look forlorn?
Come, fill your glass and we'll drink him deep,
With carefree hearts we'll drink him sleep
Till he comes next year the feast to keep.

Why, the girl, there! Look! Does she really weep?

SISTER OF CHARITY

Sister, thou, of charity,
Did thy spirit's rarity
  Earth's poor sweetness cloy?
Did angelic, lyrical
Echoes like a miracle
  Purge out human joy?

Did thine eyes, adoringly
Turned to heaven imploringly
  Find such wonders there
That thine heart, enrapturéd,
Burst its earth bonds, capturéd
  By a faith more fair?

Or was Life unkind to thee;
Did its ways seem blind to thee,
  Dangerous and slow?
Turned thy sun to showering
Till thy trouble, towering,
  Brought thy courage low?

Didst thou taste of friendlessness,
Feel the bitter endlessness
  Of unanswered love
Till thy soul despairingly,
Blindly and uncaringly,
  Turned its cry above?

IN LENT

The light-o'-love young hours
  That frolicked through the day
In diadems of flowers—
  How dear they were and gay!

Now, still as gray-cowled brothers
  The sad hours shuffling pass,
Each one like all the others,
  Droning a mumbled mass.

FROM THE SHADOW

O you with happier love-lives,
  Have pity on our night
Who grope with blinded fingers
  That never feel the light,
And stagger helpless onward
  In hopeless hope of sight!

You cannot know the shadows
  That crouch about our way,—
You, with the sun of loving
  To warm your lifelong day.
You cannot guess the spectres
  That in the darkness stray.

Our love has turned to ashes
  But still we stumble on
And clutch with anguished fingers
  At what we know is gone.
Oh, sharp the bitter briars
  Our feet have trod upon!

O you with happier love-lives,
  Withhold from us your scorn
Because our laugh rings hollow,
  Because our souls are worn.
We laugh to spite the ghost-shapes
  Of frightened conscience born.

You cannot know the shadows
  We evermore must meet—
The ghost of murdered honor,
  The souls of all things sweet,
The shuddering souls of sorrows
  That dog our dragging feet!

Our love has turned to ashes,
  But still we crave the light;
And we would leave our sinning
  If only, oh! we might!
O you with happier love-lives,
  Have pity on our night!

THE YOUNG TEACHER

So young she stands and slenderly,
  So overyoung for toiling—
A smudge of chalk dust on her cheek,
  Its powder on her hair.
She watches them so tenderly,
  The children at their moiling
Day in, day out, all through the week—
  So weary, but so fair.

Her voice grows stern to chasten them
  That should be light with laughter,
And in her eyes there seems to stir
  A far-off, wistful glow;
But swift she smiles to hasten them
  Who linger, yearning after
The budding motherhood in her
  They love but cannot know.

THE OLD TEACHER

Other women's children have drained her of her youth,
  Left her old and spent—and all alone,
Trampled on her beauty in their daily search for truth,
  With oh, so little loving to atone!

Other women's children have fed them from her brain,
  Learned from her their code of wrong and right,
With scarce a word of gratitude to ease her spirit's
    strain;
  And she is weary waiting for the night.

Other women's children have nagged away her heart,
  Left an empty aching in its place—
A longing for her motherhood that never had a start;
  But she has been a mother to the race!

YE BLESSED

O blessed, you whose dead lie still
  In quiet rows asleep!
They never haunt your sorrowing
  Or come to watch you weep.

My dead, they wander up and down
  Like living folk, on earth;
They greet me in the marketplace,
  They sit beside my hearth.

I dare not sob and stain my eyes
  For fear that they might see,
Because I know my pain would grieve
  Their dead hearts bitterly.

But I must smile and go my way
  With brave, uplifted head;
For those I mourn still walk with me,
  'Tis but their loves are dead.

They greet me in the marketplace
  Or sit my hearth beside;
And no one watching us, but me,
  Could dream that they had died.

I see their spirits change and watch
  Their hearts that turn to stone,—
Those hearts that but a breath ago
  Beat warm against my own.

But bitterest of all the pangs,
  And bitter more and more!
This sight kills even the memory
  Of what they were before.

So blessed, you whose dead lie still
  In quiet graves apart,
For you can keep them as they were,
  Remembered in your heart!

HIS LOVING CUP

He won you with the keen, young-bodied joy
  Of budding manhood. In the hot-fought race
  He gloried at the cruel wracking pace
That challenged all his strength. Without alloy
The passion of his striving.—Glowing boy!
  Then, with the victor-flush still on his face,
  He came, half shy, yet more than proud to place
Within my hands his valor-boughten toy.

Now flower-filled you stand before me here
  And stir my solitude with dreams of him.
    So beautiful he was! It seems, in truth,
Your clear-lined beauty brings him very near;
  And in the blossoms nodding from your brim
    I find the treasure of his fragrant youth.

HALF-FORGOTTEN

You that have lingered in twilight lands—
  Lands where the listening silence sings—
Have you felt their touch on your brow and hands,
  The touch of the half-forgotten things?

Musing alone till the dim day grew
  Misty with vague rememberings,
Have you seen the wavering, wistful crew—
  The ghosts of the half-forgotten things?

Loves long dead and friendships cold—
  Hark to the whispering of their wings,
Wafting you back, as the day grows old,
  Dreams of the half-forgotten things!

PENNY SONGS

If I could coin my heart's blood
  To globes of golden song
And sell them for a penny
  The public streets along,

Say, would you buy a ballad
  To help me in my need?
Or would you turn your face away
  Who made my heart to bleed?

SONG

Oh, the golden dreams
  I dreamed in days gone by!
Oh, it hardly seems
  That dreamer could be I!

Dead, like shining beads,
  My golden dreams are strung
On a string of silver songs
  I sang when I was young.

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